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DmIN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant(s): Larry D. Barto, Steven C. Nettles, Yiwei Li
Assignee: Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.
Title: Starvation Avoidance Lost Start Agent (SALSA)
Serial No.: 09/825,225 Filing Date: April 3, 2001
Examiner: Elliot L. Frank Group Art Unit: 2125
Docket No.: TT3418 Customer No.: 33438
Appeal No: 2004-1048

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REPLY BRIEF UNDER 37 CFR § 1.193

Dear Sir:

Applicants submit this Reply Brief pursuant to the Examiner's Answer mailed in this case on March 2, 2004. It is believed that no fees are due in connection with the filing of this Reply Brief, however, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct any amounts required for this Reply Brief and to credit any amounts overpaid to Deposit Account. No. 502264.

In response to Applicants arguments, the Examiner sets forth:

The appellant states that the Weaver et al. system does not release new work into a manufacturing line based on a WIP level. This argument is deemed to be narrower than [sic.] the broadest most reasonable interpretation of the claim language. The basic requirements of the disputed claim limitation are that when the WIP amount is at a certain level, additional work should be introduced to manage the workflow. The Weaver et al. system performs an equivalent function at each bottleneck station. In the prior art a machine receives a normal flow of work to be processed. Based on predetermined WIP levels established for a product and bottleneck machine, the work is either processed in the normal fashion, or alternative work is allowed to be introduced to the machine to prevent a potential bottleneck. The alternative work introduced to the station because of a certain WIP level is new to the station, regardless of its origin, and therefore deemed to satisfy the claim requirement of "releasing new work". (Reply Brief, pages 7,8.)

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's statement that the "alternative work introduced to the station . . . regardless of its origin" satisfies the claim requirement of "if the WIP value is projected to fall below the control limit during the evaluation period, that a selected amount of additional work be released into the manufacturing line", as set forth for example in claim 1. This claim limitation and the corresponding limitations of claims 2 - 4 directly relate to the goal of starvation avoidance based upon introducing work to a manufacturing line. When discussing starvation avoidance, the application sets forth:

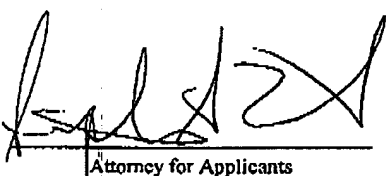
The primary goal of a SALSA [Starvation Avoidance Lot Start Agent] agent 200m is to start new lots *into the manufacturing queue* such that 1) *new lots are started just in time to avoid idling (starving) the bottleneck*, 2) to avoid starting new lots when they won't be processed anyway, and (3) achieve a desired product mix. In order to avoid starvation, a SALSA agent 200m controls the flow of work through the manufacturing process by controlling the number of lots *introduced* into the fab and entered into the manufacturing pipeline for each bottleneck resource. In other words, the present invention effects starvation avoidance by *controlling job release*. (Application, page 8, lines 3 - 12, bracketed text added, emphasis added.)

Accordingly, by a selected amount of work being released into the manufacturing line when a WIP value is projected to fall below a control limit, which is claimed in each of independent claims 1, 5, 8, 14, 20, and 24, new work is started just in time to avoid idling of the bottleneck while avoiding starting new lots that would not be processed by the bottleneck.

If applicants had intended to claim that the work be introduced to the bottleneck station, applicant would have done so. Note, for example, that claim 1 differentiates between work approaching the bottleneck workstation and work that is released into the manufacturing line of the manufacturing facility.

For the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submits that the Examiner's rejections of Claims 1 - 26 are unfounded and should be reversed.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via facsimile to the USPTO on April 12, 2004.

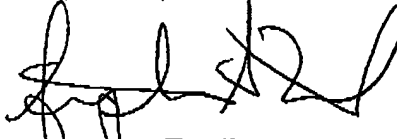


Attorney for Applicants

4/12/04

Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,



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MESSAGE:

Enclosed for entry in USSN 09/825,225, Appeal No. 2004-1048, please find a Reply Brief Under 37 CFR § 1.193 (3 pages). Thank you.

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